

International Journal of Built Environment & Sustainability

IGCESH 2018
SPECIAL ISSUE

DEMAND OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION BY ALPHA GENERATION ON EDUTAINMENT LEISURE IN THE CITY

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Article history

Received

15 May 2018

Received in revised form

19 December 2018

Accepted

25 December 2018

Published 01 April 2019

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DOI: 10.11113/ijbes.v6.n1-2.391

ABSTRACT

There had been increasing number of child-centred destination established in the city with the concept of edutainment as to fulfil the needs of alpha generation. Emphasizing on three combined elements of personalized learning, fun and play, edutainment concept is seen as new approach. This is to enhance lifelong learning for the future generation who heavily depending on the advancement and incorporation of technologies to cultivate their intelligent growth. Consequently, the establishment of demand from the preschool operators can be seen through the growing number of excursion and field trip activities organized for children. However, less was examined as to what extend the concept of city edutainment fit into the needs of the educational purposes programs. Therefore, it is important to understand as to how the existing informal educational settings should transform to meet the needs of the alpha generation either by city population or outbound tourist. Hence, the understandings by the city governance is a must in developing and evaluating policy related to edutainment as to ensure the preferences for education-based infrastructures and learning meet the needs. Thus, this paper will discuss the fundamental ability of the city that makes it qualify as edutainment destination with the specific reference to the demand from preschool education in presenting the alpha generation. This including the characteristics of alpha generation, the needs from the preschool education and the city prospects as edutainment informal learning setting. In this case, edutainment facilities are important elements for both urban planning and education which indirectly contribute to the opportunity to explore real learning experience beyond the classroom and shape a better quality of life for future generation.

Keywords: Edutainment City, Preschool Education, Alpha Generation

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, urbanization issues had been addressed worldwide by several stakeholders due to the challenges faced in order to create a better city function for the human population. The issues arise when the city population started to increase unexpectedly for the past five decades. According to New Urban Agenda (NUA)(2017), it is estimated that the world's urban population will increase to nearly double, making urbanization as one of the twenty-first century's most transformative trends. Populations,

economic activities, social and cultural interactions as well as environmental and humanitarian impacts will be highly concentrated in cities. To fulfil the needs of the city population, strategic planning and framework on the developments of the city in terms of housing, infrastructure, basic services, food security, health, education, decent jobs, safety and natural resources should be given priority by the stakeholders.

Malaysia is among the urbanized countries of East Asia where the number of populations in the big cities

continues to increase rapidly. According to Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) (2015), due to the rapid urbanisation process, the proportion of urban population had increased critically from 62% in 2000 to 70% in 2010. Kuala Lumpur Federal Territory is one of the most urbanized area in Malaysia with more than 5 million people living in the city. From the statistics, it shows that population currently focusing on living in the city as city is equipped with several functions that cater the needs of the population such as commercial, financial and producer services. Since the population concentrated and live in the city, expansion of population with different age structure occurred. Expansion of population influence the demand for early childhood education as the alpha generation who stays in the city require the provision of education facilities to enhance their early childhood development.

Early childhood is a pivotal stage of development that shape the children's future well-being and learning. According to the The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (2001), starting from birth until the age of 6, development during this phase is vital in producing a complete and healthy cognitive, emotional and physical growth of children. This statement is supported by a research where it shown that half of a person's intelligence potential is developed since the age of 4 and this intervention can have a lasting effect on intellectual capacity, personality and social behaviour (The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), 2001). Thus, improvement should be made in the provision of education facilities based on the preference from the early childhood level.

In relation to the demand on provision of education facilities and importance of early childhood development, government had introduced early childhood education as education helps in enhancing the children's growth. In Malaysia, early childhood education system is improving to cater the needs of the preschool students based on their preferences and interactive way of learning. The combination of formal and non-formal learning is a great step taken by the preschool operator as it will diverse the learning experiences obtain by the students, theoretically and practically. It can be seen from the provision of field trip and excursion activities organized by the preschool

to the informal learning settings such as museums, zoos, aquariums, planetariums and historical sites. Indirectly, it can be seen that aside from the education perspective, tourism industry also plays an important role in providing attraction to accommodate the needs of the preschool children in terms of informal learning.

Recently, the tourism industry had been focusing on the provision of branded themepark and waterpark destination to secure its position as Asia's preferred family holiday destination. Attractions such as LEGOLAND Malaysia, Movie Animation Park Studios and Nicklodeon Lost Lagoon are one of the main tourism product used to promote tourism in Malaysia among inbound and outbound tourists. However, behind the two alternatives, attention should also be given to the new generation of indoor attractions. According to Malaysian Association of Amusement Themepark and Family Attractions (MAATFA)(2015), the new generation of indoor attraction considers four major trends of new types of tourism attraction such as active play, edutainment, lifestyle-driven and IP-based attraction. Since the tourism industry had shifted from labour-based to knowledge-based industry, this paper will discuss more on edutainment attraction due to the transition of generation that requires education facilities and attractions to adopt with the technological trend. Best approach to facilitate the needs is by introducing the edutainment concept where this concept combines two major elements which are entertainment and education. Currently, the trends on the provision of child-centred destination with the concept of edutainment is growing especially in big cities such as Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Johor Bahru. In Kuala Lumpur, several edutainment attractions include Kidzania, Petrosains, Aquaria KLCC, Dinoscovey and Little Kingdom while in Johor Bahru, the destination include Big Boss N' Land, G-Kids Themepark and Fanpekka.

Generally, edutainment attractions provide environment that enhance psychological development, provision of fairground amusement, rich in sensory stimuli, include play and technological features and usually located in an indoor area. The rising of provision of this type of attraction indicate that there are highly demand for this kind of attraction and indirectly, it shows that the needs of consumer's attitudes and expectations also change where learning

had started to becoming part of leisure time especially for the Generation Alpha. However, less was examined as to what extend the concept of city edutainment fit into the needs of the educational purpose programs. Therefore, it is important to understand as to what extent the demand of edutainment attraction from the perspective of preschool education and how the existing as well as future informal educational settings should transform to meet the needs of the alpha generation either by city population or outbound tourist.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview of Edutainment

Edutainment is a hybrid genre that expresses the combination of education and entertainment where the learning process is enjoyable and occur in less serious environment (Lee and Wai, 2006, Isa et al., 2015). This concept engages nature of entertaining, media-based material, narratives or games-like interactive environment while achieving several educational goals (Lee and Wai, 2006). Edutainment also can be explained as a concept of fun learning and function as a tool for the teachers or parents to educate the children and entertain them at the same time (Isa et al., 2015). According to Anikina and Yakimenko (2015), the adaptation of this concept will provide the opportunity especially for the tech-savvy learner to be able to learn in most interesting, interactive, engage and experiential way. Edutainment also can be explained as a feature of modern technology implementation of modern form of entertainment in education where it involves the process of transferring knowledge and having the opportunity to learn something new from other alternatives yet reliable resources (Anikina and Yakimenko, 2015). Besides that, edutainment concept also helps in stimulate entertaining learning through interaction and communication as well as exploring by creating learning awareness, trial and error (Shulman and Bowen, 2000).

According to Isa et al. (2015), the purpose of edutainment concept is to get the attention and increase motivation of the learners through rich combinations of multimedia elements. It provides the opportunities to the learners to obtain the knowledge through stories, information or games at their own

pace and way, link ideas that they gain or analysing the idea received during the learning process. This is supported by Okan (2003) where the main purpose of the adaptation of edutainment concept is to balance the emotions of the user with colourful graphics, designs, animation and interactive pedagogy to convince learners that learning is an exciting and entertaining process. Learning process should not be tedious and boring (Anikina and Yakimenko, 2015). Besides that, Anikina and Yakimenko (2015) also stated that the main reason this concept is being applied is to provide fun and happy atmosphere of learning. From the definition and purpose of edutainment approach above, it can be concluded that the integration of education and entertainment brings a positive influence on an individual where it will attract an individual to learn in an enjoyable environment while obtaining new knowledge. This concept will bring a good experience to learner as it used several technological features such as animation, sounds and graphic where information gained will be memorable, easily understood and encourage personal development of an individual.

There are several types of edutainment approach. The first type of edutainment approach is location-based edutainment. As stated by Anikina and Yakimenko (2015), there is no specific place for the application of this new concept. It can be class, park, museum, gallery and club where an individual has the opportunity to gain knowledge and experience in a relaxed atmosphere with technological-based of presentation. According to Rapeepisarn et al. (2006), type of edutainment can be organized in different ways. The first type is location-based edutainment. It can be divided into two categories which are interactive and participatory and non-interactive and spectator. Interactive participatory is a phase where an individual can play and participate in the learning process while non-interactive and spectator, the phase provides an opportunity for the individual to just be seated and exploring the knowledge given during the learning process. The second type is edutainment by type of media. It can categorize based on technological medium such as edutainment on TV, computer edutainment and edutainment on internet. Edutainment in TV include comedic drama, historical drama, sketch comedy, skills and travel while computer edutainment include game types, adventure, quiz, role-play, strategy, simulation and experimental

drama. Edutainment on internet include tele-teaching and tele-learning systems and web-based educational systems.

However, looking at the trend of current tourism industry, it can be seen that the development of the first type of edutainment which is location-based edutainment is growing in the cities as to meet the needs of new generation referred as ‘digital native’ or

Generation Alpha. Thus, the characteristics of edutainment should be highlighted to ensure that the provision of location-based edutainment meet the needs of the new generation. According to Rapeepisarn et al. (2006), Hussain et al. (2003) and Nemec and Trna (2007), there are several characteristics that reflect the design of edutainment. The characteristics are described in Table 1.

Table 1 Characteristics of Edutainment

No	Component	Explanation
1	Meaningful learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of environment and activities in which children finds learning and knowledge gain to be meaningful and useful. • Provision of environment consist of activities that enhance psychological development. Activities should include the process of explore, imagine, construct, discuss, plan, manipulate, problem solving, dramatize, create, experiment, logic and critical thinking, visualize and discovery.
2	Entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of environment and activities in which children finds it exciting to learn, explore the knowledge embedded in the activities, entertaining, joyful and consist of fairground amusement.
3	Experiential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of environment and activities that rich in sensory stimuli such as cognitive artifact and are experience directly without any in between link. • Provision of environment and activities that encourage the children to experience the role individually involving simulation of a situation.
4	Game/play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of environment consist of free activity involving play features such as competing, set of goal to achieve, rich of challenge and create sense of success to the children.
5	Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of environment consist of technological features emphasized on several characteristics such as interactivity, the ability to respond to a user’s inputs, the ability to deliver the message content in a virtual environment and the usage of visual material include sound, animation, video, writing and pictures.
6	Places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of indoor environment and activities

All the six characteristics reflect the design of edutainment that should be implemented in the location-based edutainment to ensure that the ability of an attraction to enhance development growth of the new generation is successful. To ensure the compatibility between the needs of early childhood level and characteristics of edutainment, the information on generation alpha should be taken into consideration to ensure the impact will create a better future generation.

2.2 Generation Alpha

Generation Alpha refers to children who are born between 2010 to 2025 (Ramadlani and Wisobono, 2017). Currently defined as ‘digital native’, this

generation had been exposed and immersed in the digital world since their early years of living where technology plays an important role in influencing their way of life and behaviours (Reis, 2018). According to Barkowitz (2016), Generation Alpha are highly dependant on display and touch screens since they were born in the technological era. This is supported by Carter (2016) where the children of millennials are growing up with the exposure to several technological features such as high -tech gadgets, the internet and social networks. They also are most likely influenced by the visual and video format information compared to written and verbal format. There are five traits of Generation Alpha as stated by Schawbel (2014). The traits are high entrepreneurial soul, high intelligence in technology

and rely heavily on social media, prefer to shop online, they are highly influenced by their parent and they are able to fulfill their needs and desire on their own, more educated and have highly prepared to face greater challenges in the future life.

From the educational point of view, Ramadlani and Wisobono (2017) stated that there are several educational approaches for the Generation of Alpha where they focused on visual literacy and character education. Visual literacy plays an important role in representing and describing the knowledge in interactive ways as well as supporting the existing information include written and oral information (Ramadlani and Wisobono, 2017). Representations of the knowledge are often varied where it incorporates illustrations as well as text to describe the concepts of pattern and ideas during the process of learning (Stokes, 2001). It will indirectly attract the generation to focus on several aspect that are interesting or entertaining in the learning process and influence them to have in depth analysis on certain aspects (Ramadlani and Wisobono, 2017). Although there has never been a vivid explanation or scientific studies on this new generation, however, it was not impossible that this generation will cause massive impact on changes due to their needs and expectation especially in the world of education.

2.3 Preschool Education

Early childhood education or preschool is the first level of education in Malaysia enrol by the children from the age of 4 to 6 years old. This level of education was guided by the National Preschool Curriculum Standard which encompasses all the early childhood development characteristics. Early childhood is a pivotal stage of development that shape the children's future wellbeing and learning. Thus, it is important to monitor development starting from birth until the age of 6 to produce a complete and

healthy cognitive, emotional and physical growth of the children. This statement is supported by a research where it is shown that half of a person's intelligence potential is developed since the age of 4 and this intervention can have a lasting effect on intellectual capacity, personality and social behaviour (The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), 2001). Generally, early childhood development can be divided into four which are cognitive, language, socioemotional and physical development.

According to Yamat (2010), early childhood education can be categorized into three which are formal learning, non-formal learning and informal learning. Formal learning can be defined as conventional learning where learning takes place in formal settings such as school and is highly structured in its curriculum, learning activities and assessment (Eshach, 2007). Non-formal learning can be referred as learning that take place outside of the school but often planned and organized (Eshach, 2007). Som and Furqan (2009) stated that the non-formal learning had been adopted several years ago through the provision of field trip and excursion activities among the school students. Informal learning can be described as learning that take place in everyday life activities related to work, family and leisure (Colley and Malcolm, 2002). Nowadays, there are trends of preschool operators combining formal and non-formal learning to satisfy the needs of the students. One of the way is through the provision of excursion and field trip activities for the students. According to Leonie et al. (2003), Aykut (2016), Kisiel (2005) and Falk et al (1998), there are several motivations from the teacher's perspective to conduct non-formal learning. Table 2 shows the motivations from the teacher's perspective to conduct non-formal learning in four different components.

Table 2 Motivation from the Teacher's Perspective to Conduct Non-formal Learning

No	Component	Explanation
1	Education and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attraction and activities connect with classroom curriculum • Attraction provide exposure to new experiences • Attraction enhance interest curiosity and motivation • Attraction provide hands-on activities • Attraction provides rich of knowledge resources • Attraction allow student to explore and discover
2	Entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attraction provide fun and enjoyment activities • Attraction provide resting and relaxing activities • Experience thrill and excitement • Creating positive leisure habit
3	Social interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attraction helps in relationship enhancement • Attraction is a good place for social outing • Attraction provide opportunities for interaction • Attraction provide opportunities to meet new people
4	Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attraction is seen as a leisure destination • Attraction provide creative and innovative displays • Attraction has good reputation and recommendation • Attractions is value for money • Child-centred approach attraction

3. Inquiry for Further Study

Early childhood education is currently improving to meet the needs of the preschool students based on their preferences through the early childhood development characteristics. One of the step taken by the preschool operator is by combining formal and non-formal learning as it will diverse the learning experiences and helps the student to gain more knowledge from different educational settings as well as improving the early childhood development growth. The demand for non-formal learning can be seen from the provision of fieldtrips and excursion activities conducted by the preschool operators to the informal educational settings such as science centre, museums and zoos. However, due to the transition of generation, there is a slightly change in way of choosing destination for the non-formal learning and informal learning. Generation Alpha is the current generation where children started to turn to digital devices for learning, interaction and play. Currently, they are more demanding in terms of the attraction's feature. They want more physical experience, fun, interactive and responsive environment for them to experience effective non-formal and informal learning. Thus, it can be seen from the increasing number in the provision of edutainment attraction especially in the cities in form of location-based edutainment. Generally, edutainment attraction

provide environment that enhance psychological development, provision of fairground amusement, rich in sensory stimuli, include play and technological features and usually located in an indoor area.

However, limited research had been done on the characteristics of edutainment leisure attraction that satisfy the needs of the early childhood level especially preschool student in order for them to gain knowledge and enhance their development growth in out-of-school settings. White (2003) and Hussain et al. (2003) had highlighted the characteristics of edutainment attraction. However, it does not being interpreted in terms of physical characteristic that will help in designing and providing attraction according to the needs of this new generation. Therefore, further study need to be done on the physical characteristic of edutainment leisure attraction based on the needs of Generation Alpha to create a better function of the city and at the same time benefits physical, economic and social development of the city. There are several efforts had been made to describe edutainment in terms of physical characteristics. However, it only limited to formal learning without taking into consideration on how city can serve the inbound and outbound population and visitors in terms of education embedded in leisure place.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the trends of edutainment attraction and the provision of excursion as well as field trips activities among preschool students have triggered the needs to provide informal educational settings that comply with the demand from the Generation Alpha. It does not only provide learning but also create an environment for the students to be able to learn in the most fun and enjoyable way. It is also one of the effective learning strategy to gain variety of knowledge aside from fixed curriculum taught in school. Thus, edutainment facilities are important elements for both urban planning and education where it will indirectly contribute to the opportunity to explore real learning experience beyond the classroom and shape a better quality of life for future generation. Hence, further study needs to be done on how city can fit into the educational purpose programs through the information on physical characteristic of edutainment and how it will influence physical settings, urban economic and social development.

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